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## Research Questions for the New Millennium

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**W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research**

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Randall W. Eberts

## Research Questions for the New Millennium

In the next three issues of *Employment Research*, senior staff at the Institute will offer their views on what we as a profession know and what we don't know about critical employment-related issues. The authors will also present fundamental questions that research should address in the next several years in order to help inform future policy decisions and to improve the delivery of employment services.

Finding practical solutions to employment-related issues is the mission of the Upjohn Institute. We believe that sound research is essential for the formulation of wise policy and the administration of successful programs. Not only must the proper questions be posed and addressed, but the research findings must also be made relevant to policymakers and program administrators. During the Institute's 55 years of operation, we have sought to bring research and operations together. We practice this dual role on a daily basis. We conduct research in variety of areas, and as a Service Delivery Area, we administer all the state and federal labor market programs for our part of Michigan.

We also bring together researchers and practitioners to discuss and explore how research can better inform employment policy and improve the delivery of services. As an example of this collaboration, in 1971, Congress presented a bipartisan proposal to the Upjohn Institute suggesting that the Institute bring together a diverse group of "academic and other experts, and Congressmen and their staff, for informed and informal discussions of the role of public service employment in manpower policy." The proposal grew out of Congress's mounting frustration over their inability to pass the Employment and Manpower Act of 1970. The two houses could not agree on specific aspects of employment policy; thus, they proposed that "it would be of great assistance if the Upjohn Institute could conduct a series of seminars . . . exploring the issues involved in unemployment and public service jobs." A conference was held, a book was published, and Congress eventually passed an employment bill.

Among the recent forums of this type was a conference held last April and co-sponsored with the U.S. Department of Labor. We brought researchers and state and federal administrators together to explore innovative ways to deliver workforce services more quickly and more effectively through statistical targeting. Highlights of the conference were included in the last issue of this newsletter.

We hope that our perspectives offered in these articles will help define the research questions that can better inform policy and improve employment programs as we embark on the new millennium.

*Randall W. Eberts is executive director of the Upjohn Institute.*